

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY DOHA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0197

NFO RUQMBI/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 0063

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY SAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 0204

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR XF US QA

SUBJECT : SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BRIEFS AMIR OF QATAR ON
SECRETARY'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS

REF: DOHA 175 AND 205

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER HAS BRIEFED AMIR OF QATAR
ON SECRETARY'S RECENT CONVERSATION IN DAMASCUS. SYRIANS APPARENTLY
TRYING TO ASSURE THAT THEY WILL NOT BE LEFT OUT OF NEXT STEP
TOWARD MID EAST SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ABD AL-HALIM KHADDAM VISITED QATAR
FEB 17-18 REPORTEDLY CARRYING MESSAGE TO AMIR, SHAYKH KHALIFA
BIN HAMAD AL THANI, FROM PRESIDENT ASAD ABOUT SECRETARY'S RECENT
VISIT TO DAMASCUS. ACCORDING LOCAL PRESS, KHADDAM VISITING NUMBER
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OF COUNTRIES IN AREA, INCLUDING BAHRAIN, ABU DHABI AND KUWAIT,

WITH SIMILAR MESSAGE.

3. ON FEB 18 I CALLED ON AMIR TO BRIEF HIM ON RIYADH COM'S CONFERENCE WITH SECRETARY (DOHA 205) JUST AFTER AMIR HAD MET WITH KHADDAM. I ASKED KHALIFA WHAT KHADDAM HAD TOLD HIM. HE RESPONDED THAT KHADDAM LEFT DEFINITE IMPRESSION THAT SYRIANS WERE "MISH MABSUUTHIN" WITH SECRETARY. ACCORDING KHALIFA, PRESIDENT ASAD HAD TOLD SECRETARY THAT HIS STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO SETTLEMENT WAS BEING INTERPRETED AS US PLOT TO SPLIT ARABS. KHALIFA REMARKED THAT THIS INTERPRETION WAS WIDELY BELIEVED THROUGHOUT ARAB WORLD EVEN THOUGH HE, KING FAISAL, PRESIDENT SADAT, AND OTHER MODERATE ARABS WHO SUPPORTED AND UNDERSTOOD STEP-BY-STEP FORMULA DID NOT BELIEVE THIS.

4. THE AMIR RMPHASIZED, AS HE HAD IN OUR PREVIOUS CONVERSATION, (DOHA 175) THAT SECRETARY'S NEXT STEP TOWARD SETTLEMENT MUST INCLUDE SOME WITHDRAWAL IN SYRIA AND ON WEST BANK AS WELL AS EGYPT, EVEN IF THIS A COSMETIC AND VAGUE AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO BE IMPLEMENTED AT ANOTHER TIME. THE AMIR EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN THAT SYRIANS COULD DO SOMETHING RASH IF THEY BELIEVED THEY BEING LEFT OUT OF NEXT STEP. HE CAUTIONED THAT IT EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT SADAT WOULD BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE IN ARAB WORLD EVEN IF IT APPEARED HE GOING IT ALONG.

5. AMIR STRESSED THAT IT WAS HIS CONVICTION THAT SYRIANS SERIOUSLY DESIRED PEACE BUT THEIR FEAR OF ISOLATION WAS CONDITIONING FACTOR. IN RESPONSE TO QUERY, KHALIFA SAID HE JUDGED ASAD'S INTERNAL SITUATION AS MORE STABLE THAN THAT OF SADAT'S. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE REMARKED THAT KHADDAM HIMSELF, WHO HAD BEEN KNOWN IN PAST AS FIREBRAND WHO OPPOSED ASAD'S MODERATE POLICIES, HAD MATURED AND "CALMED DOWN". ACCORDING KHALIFA, INFLUENCE OF DOMESTIC COMMUNISTS IN SYRIA NEGILIGIBLE AS COMPARED WITH EGYPT WHERE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER WOULD BE "IRREVERSIBLE". KHALIFA SAID THAT SYRIANS WOULD CHUCK SOVIETS OUT TOMORROW IF THEY WERE NOT SO DEPENDENT ON THEM FOR ARMS.

6. COMMENT: ASAD MESSAGE APPARENTLY DESIGNED AS PRESSURE TACTIC ON SADAT AND SECRETARY IN EFFORT TO ASSURE THAT SYRIANS WILL NOT BE LEFT OUT OF NEXT STEP TOWARD MID EAST SETTLEMENT.
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IF SO, AMIR HAS PICKED UP HIS CUE. HIS REMARKS, HOWEVER, ARE FULLY CONSISTENT WITH VIEWS HE HAS PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED ON SUBJECT.
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